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## Large and in Charge: Five secrets to organizing big events

“Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today,” said Malcolm X. This is certainly true of planning a major meeting or event. Strategic planning is key. If you want to organize a captivating experience for over 2,000 people, you better plan the *coup* well in advance.

### 1. Choose your destination wisely

Getting hotel rooms or venues big enough to host and feed thousands can be tricky. Make sure the venues you choose have ample space and can meet the

requirements of a large audience. The same goes for transportation.

## **2. The early bird gets the worm**

Start planning a major event 18 months in advance. Appoint an operations manager to plan and coordinate, as well as a logistics managers, to get a full picture of how it will all come together.

It's essential that all team members are focused on the event as a whole rather than solely on their individual areas. Remember that the objective here is to deliver a unique event that brings all the areas together, towards a common goal of making attendees feel valued.

Timing is key. Book early to get those 1200 hotel rooms, that perfect conference centre, the spectacular venue for the gala evening and seats on the flagship carrier.

## **3. Be aware of your duty of care**

You have chosen a fabulous destination with direct flights or even better, booked charter flights, customized to the very last detail. Everything's perfect. Or so you think. Have you considered who is flying together? Companies have tight policies to protect their operations in case something goes wrong. Make sure not to put all your VIPs on the same flight.

The same thing applies to ground transportation and hotels. It's possible that you will need to take a trip with safety experts to validate if your chosen venue meets security requirements.

## **4. Go for the exclusivity factor**

Your attendees can travel to anywhere in the world, but can they dine in a venue like the stock exchange building, do a private tour of a world-famous museum at night, or enjoy a private pass to Cirque du Soleil over dinner?

Always shoot for the 'wow' factor and organize special experiences that can't be replicated elsewhere. Your attendees will talk about your event forever. Also look for interactions with the local community. Immersion in a local,

authentic experience will create lasting memories.

### **5. Speed-up logistics**

Having 2000 people go through security at the airport check-in, all at once, isn't pretty. Work on how to speed up logistics to spare your attendees the boring wait. It's all about the attendee experience, so make sure the flow runs smoothly during the whole event.

It might seem like a lot of trouble, but after so many years of organizing large-scale events, I can say that with meticulous planning and teamwork: the more, the merrier!

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